



What Can You Do?

Steve Warmath, Safety Officer

What Can You Do? #1

CORNERING You are riding on a curving, two-lane road. You are traveling just below the speed limit. You round a right-hand curve and feel your bike begin to drift outward, with your

wheels almost touching the centerline.

Suddenly, an oncoming car appears, straddling the centerline. You feel like a deer caught in the headlights. What would you do?

Many riders freeze up in this situation. They roll off the throttle and stare at the oncoming vehicle ... and do little else. Also known as *target fixation*, it can easily lead to disaster: The bike tends to go where you look.

Incorrect: Freeze/ Stare

The best response is to hold the throttle steady, focus your head and eyes where you *want* to go – the turn's exit is your target, not the oncoming vehicle! – and lean the bike harder by *countersteering* (pressing forward on the inside handgrip) and tightening your line.

Correct:

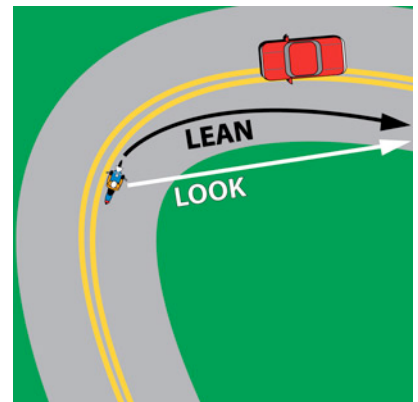
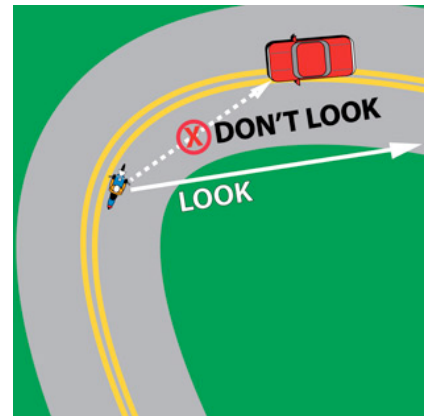
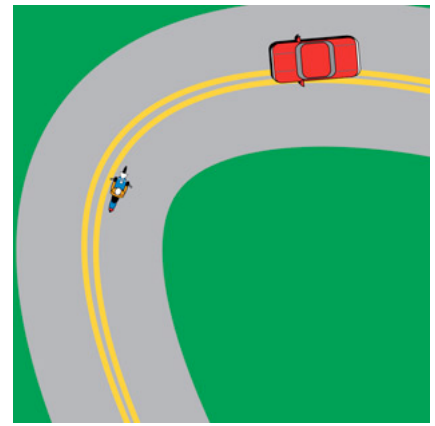
- Hold throttle steady
- Look through the turn
- Countersteer

Running wide in a corner is a common cause of motorcycle fatalities. Even experienced riders fall into this trap if they're not looking far enough ahead. It doesn't matter whether it's an oncoming car, a tighter turn than the rider expected or some other obstacle. When a rider suddenly decides they're not going to make it, they often panic, look down and forget to steer through the turn.

When the road surface is good, a motorcycle should be able to negotiate a curve safely at its advisory speed limit – as long as the rider stays steady on the gas, *looks through the turn* and countersteers to control path of travel.

What Can You Do? #2

BRAKING You are riding on an Interstate freeway at 65 mph in traffic. You are positioning yourself to maintain a good space cushion, but are distracted. Drivers keep creeping up too closely before they pass you. Others simply sit in your blind spot and talk on the phone. Distracted by what's going on behind you, you glance up and suddenly, traffic is completely stopped in all three lanes in front of you – a barricade of red brake lights and bumpers. And you're about to plow into them at 65 mph. What would you do?



Most people in this situation will at least *try* to stop the bike. Unfortunately, riders often ignore the front brake, lock up the rear wheel, lay the bike down and/or crash into another vehicle. Riders also fail to identify an escape path – a gap big enough for a motorcycle, even if that means using the space between cars to avoid a crash.

Incorrect:

- Under use the front brake
- Overuse the rear brake
- Lay the bike down and/or crash

While many riders could not avoid this collision, a rider with good visual and braking skills and a good space cushion should be able to stop safely. The correct response is to immediately apply maximum straight-line braking, using both brakes simultaneously, to get your speed down. Remember, in an emergency, 75 percent or more of your stopping power comes from the front brake. Do not lock either wheel or lay the bike down.

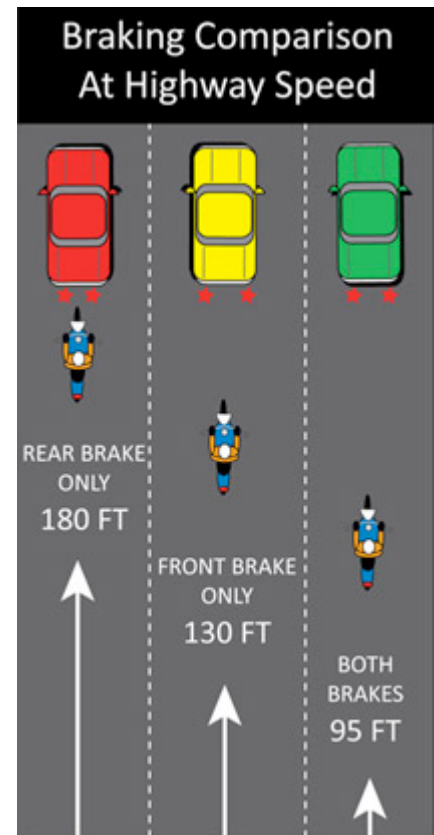
Keep your head and eyes up and try to identify a gap between vehicles you can use if you need to. If you can't get the bike stopped in time (or if you do get it stopped safely, but are in danger of being rear-ended yourself), now is the time to deploy your escape route: Release the brakes, guide the motorcycle into the gap and then stop again.

Correct:

- Apply maximum braking
- Keep the bike upright
- Look for an escape path

When motorcycles are involved in rear-end crashes on the freeway in Oregon, it's usually the motorcycle that rear ends another vehicle, not the other way around. Every year, far too many riders are injured and killed when fast-moving traffic stops – and they're not prepared.

Maximum braking and a well-timed escape route might keep a rider from plowing into parked traffic, but a good visual lead and space cushioning can prevent this situation from developing in the first place. Freeway traffic rarely just “suddenly stops” without warning. Congestion is predictable and rather easy to spot if you're watching well ahead – 10-20 seconds up the road – and not staring at the vehicles right in front of you. Unfortunately, many riders get caught daydreaming, or are momentarily distracted, and fall into this deadly trap.



“Be careful out there....it’s a jungle.” *Steve*